

2023/24 ENG

Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe Certification Cycle 2023-2024

Regular evaluation :

EUROPEAN ROUTE OF HISTORIC GARDENS

Independent expert report

Cultural route
of the Council of Europe
Itinéraire culturel
du Conseil de l'Europe



Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe Evaluation Cycle 2023-2024

Independent expert report

European Route of Historic Gardens

Author information:

MANUEL PEREGRINA

Affiliation (Institute of Iberian Archaeology, University of Jaén)



European Route of
Historic Gardens
Itinerario Europeo dei Giardini Storici
Itinerario Europeo de Jardines Históricos
Itinéraire Européen des Jardins Historiques

Cultural route
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**The views expressed in this independent expert report are those of the author, and in no way compromise the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe.*

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¹ *This section should also specify whether the network has members in the Russian Federation and their nature (public, private, NGO, etc.). It should also shed light on the decisions taken by the network following the termination of the Russian Federation's membership in the Council of Europe and on the activities carried out by the Russian members of the network since last year.*

1. Executive Summary

The Cultural Route of Historic Gardens (the ERHG European Route of Historic Gardens) remains incorporated as a non-profit organisation thanks to its registration as an Association under the Ministry of the Interior of the Spanish Government. Its head office is in the Spanish town of Lloret de Mar, where it was founded in 2016.

The network currently includes 31 members, which manage 47 cultural sites directly linked to the central theme of the Route. The central theme and objectives set out in the Association's statutes are directly present in the activities of the members, as they are all entities aligned with the guidelines assumed by their membership and, consequently, aligned with the values of the Council of Europe and/or other international conventions. The work done by the management team to maintain this rigour should be emphasised and is undoubtedly visible in the upward trend in the development of the Route despite the post-COVID years.

Since the application for certification was approved, the ERHG has taken up and improved on the recommendations made during the evaluation of applications for the 2019-2020 Cycle. This is confirmed, on the one hand, in the expectations of growth of the members and in their research through the systematisation of a strategy and mapping of its own, which involves the Scientific Committee (with transversal research axes), for the growth and balance of the Network, which can be seen in the current number of members. And secondly, in the quantitative and qualitative growth of the activities carried out as an organising body and as a collaborator over these years, which correspond to the 2023-2024 Evaluation Cycle. Decisive work is also being done to consolidate collaboration between members through the joint presentation of European projects, with the aim of developing common lines of training, research, and dissemination.

For the next three years, the expansion of the Network should increase according to the documentation and forecasts. The sustainable growth of the Network must be maintained, with particular emphasis on involving members from other countries with special historic gardens that are not currently represented.

The evaluation is broadly in line with the requirements for maintaining the certification as a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe.

Expert summary conclusions		
	YES	No
The theme complies with criteria listed in Resolution CM/Res(2013)67, I. List of eligibility criteria for themes	X	
The Cultural Route complies with the criteria for actions listed in Resolution CM/Res (2013)67, II.List of priority fields of action.	X	
The Cultural Route complies with the criteria for networks listed in Resolution CM/Res (2013)67, III. List of criteria for networks.	X	
The Cultural Route implements the Guidelines for the Use of the logo" Cultural Route of the Council of Europe" .	X	

2. Introduction

The governing body that manages the Cultural Route of Historic Gardens is the European Historic Gardens Network (ERHG), a non-profit organisation promoted by two Spanish town councils, Lloret de Mar and Aranjuez (via the Aranjuez-Natural Landscape Foundation) and the "Heritage, Creativity and Cultural Tourism" workshop organised by the University of Barcelona. Its statutes were registered on 26 April 2016 and its first Ordinary General Meeting was held on 19 January 2017.

The new president of the ERHG in 2023 is Lukasz Przybylak, landscape architect and adviser to the Chancellery of the President of the Republic of Poland on historic gardens. The secretary of the ERHG is Ana Fuentes, Director of Cultural Heritage at Lloret de Mar Town Council. The post of Executive Director continues to be held by Ana Rosa Moreno. The Scientific Committee is made up of eight specialists in different fields of research and management related to the theme of the Route.

The main aim of the association is to improve and promote European historic gardens that meet the definition set out by the International Committee of Historic Gardens ICOMOS-IFLA in the Florence Charter of 1981. The aim of this initiative is to recognise the historical, artistic, and social value of historic gardens and the fact that they form part of a common European heritage. The central theme and objectives set out in the Association's statutes are directly present in the activities of its members and are therefore aligned with the values of the Council of Europe and other international conventions.

The development of the route is entirely correct from the point of view of the vision of joint actions, the activities generating synergies between members, the growth in the number of members, the progressive growth of the budget, governance, and its practical development. The maintenance of regular face-to-face meetings also contributes to internal cohesion: the annual General Meetings and Forums, which address various transversal themes that enrich and complement the main theme of the Route; the European Day of Historic Gardens, every 26 April, a celebration which this year, 2023, has completed its fourth edition.

The network is now composed of 31 members (16 more than at the time of the last evaluation), who manage 47 cultural sites directly linked to the Route's central theme.

Between 2021 and 2023, members have extended their activities in countries already represented and have opened up in new countries, making a total of 10 countries in the network: Belgium, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Spain, and Ukraine.

As it was requested a regular evaluation from the EICR for the 2023-2024 Cycle on 31 July 2023, the requested documentation was submitted. Fulfilling the required criteria in due time and conditions.

The headquarters is located in Masia de Can Saragossa - Av. Vila de Tossa, s/n. 17310 Lloret de Mar - Girona / Spain, with visibility through posters, brochures, direct attention.

3. Main Body Evaluation

3.1 Cultural Route theme

3.1.1 Definition of the theme of the route

The theme of the Cultural Route which led to its certification continues to be consolidated and strengthened based on the definition of a Historic Garden which, since the Florence Charter in 1981, has already been implemented by consensus: The Historic Gardens of Europe.

Over the centuries, they have been clearly unique sites where contact and the transfer of knowledge in different fields are clearly evident, not only in botany, but also in architecture or through artistic creation, giving rise to this connection and cooperation between members.

In this sense, we have been able to verify, through consultation of the documentation presented and the activities developed over these years, that they are continuing in this direction.

We understand that there is coherence and clarity in each of the activities, with the gardens themselves being the framework for the celebration and its content. We take as an example the individual actions carried out as part of the European Day of Historic Gardens, or the specific activities planned in those years, both in winter and in summer, which highlight the value of the theme.

Through the members who compose the ERHG, we can make a tour on this subject since we note that they are centres of knowledge via the Botanical Gardens, that they are conveyors of the social situation of Europe at different periods of history since they are places or partners which contain gardens of historical heritage, palace gardens or private gardens currently open to the public, or which are museums whose main objective is the transmission of this very particular heritage.

We have seen that both the ERHG's management and administration are aware of the potential of the theme that defines the Route to continue exploring joint actions that promote exchange between young people, with a great field of action and possibilities for the planning of training and work actions..., and to propose innovative and creative activities to bring this heritage closer to them. This is what they have communicated to us in the meetings we have attended.

3.1.2 Historical and cultural context

A particular emphasis is given, by its conception and activity, to the local/national identity of the member countries through the Historic Gardens, as they are spaces where knowledge, experience and know how on different subjects have been passed on over the centuries. There are examples of different historical moments, different artistic styles and even different cultures represented through the partners involved: The National Garden of Athens, guardian

of the memory of Antiquity and an important stage in the modern history of Greece; The Gardens of the Royal Castle in Warsaw, which are an example of both spatial and botanical transformation over the centuries thanks to contacts with other gardens in Central Europe; The Park of Pena in Sintra, which links the monastic architecture of the Hieronymite order with palatial architecture, complemented by a historic garden inspired by the models of the Romantic period in which it was built by King Ferdinand II of Portugal; The Gardens of the Alhambra, like the splendour of the flowering period of the last dynasty to rule Europe between the 13th and 15th centuries. ... and we could mention each of the historic sites and gardens that constitute the Route as each one of them makes a reference to its territorial scale.

These different historical and cultural contexts reflected in the historic gardens have given the ERHG the opportunity over the years to collaborate and organise activities that showcase this diversity. The clearest example of this is the series of videos entitled "Gardens supporting Europe". The gardens that sustain Europe", spread over different historical periods, of which we currently have a sample of 3 chapters out of the 6 planned.

3.1.3 Council of Europe values represented by the theme

The ERHG continues to represent the values of the Council of Europe through the themes of the of the common memory, social and political movements, and the responsible and sustainable use of heritage, through the implementation of actions along these lines (open days, visits by specialists, recreational activities for schools and young people, scientific activities, etc.).

In this sense, the variety of historic gardens that constitute the network demonstrates the European cultural diversity that has existed in Europe, which is one of the main themes of the European Historic Gardens Days organised in recent years.

The activities for schoolchildren, mainly proposed by the partners individually, although directly supported by the ERHG, show the awareness and understanding of European diversity through the educational tools that they use, particularly visible in the activities proposed in both winter and summer.

We can also see how they are working with certain partners to integrate private gardens or gardens without access as a cultural resource into the territory by promoting collaboration and equity, working to enhance them and open them up to the public, and joining the ERHG, as is the case with the Xunta de Galicia, with smaller neighbouring gardens of great importance on a regional scale.

3.2 Fields of action

In the actions proposed over the years by the ERHG, we can see how, through the agreements and consensus reached by the partners, activities have been proposed aimed at achieving the general lines proposed since the beginning of the Route.

In general, the activity is based on:

- Investigation; thanks to the contribution and guidance of the Scientific Committee
- Network cooperation; through partner contacts and decision-making
- And dissemination; through the planning of both individual and joint activities, and their subsequent communication and public information.

Over the years, we have seen how efforts have been made to launch joint transnational activities despite the pandemic situation. To overcome this obstacle, joint activities as attractive as the "European Day of Historic Gardens" have been implemented, and the "European Forums of Historic Gardens" have been consolidated.

On the fields of action list remains that of generating a common dynamic among all members, but also that of increasing their number by continuing the strategy initiated a few years ago.

On the one hand, we note that this priority continues to be maintained as the main one, since their assimilation by all the members of the ERHG is not uniform, which imposes on the Administrative Board the task of transmitting the importance and value of belonging to the route. On the other hand, although we have seen an increase in the number of members over the last three years, the incorporation of certain World Heritage gardens is still pending, as proposed in the previous evaluation, since they have not been able to join during these years.

During the site visit, these priorities were communicated to us by the director, Ana Fuentes, in addition to identifying and promoting the good practices developed individually by the partners and being the framework through which they are replicated in all the others. This is an opportunity to consolidate cooperation between partners in the years to come, and we see how the activity of training, youth exchange and placement in different areas such as botany, gardening, maintenance or management... is and will be addressed through the presentation of European projects with the participation of several Network partners to work in this direction.

Likewise, it will also be a priority, in parallel to the growth of the above, to reach a consensus between all the partners on how to carry them out through the management and day-to-day technical work, strengthening the management and therefore the development of the ERHG company.

It is worth mentioning that a priority that has already been achieved, and which illustrates the approach of generating common dynamics, has been the research for initiatives and strategies to adapt the activities proposed by the ERHG in a period as difficult as the years following the COVID-19 pandemic. What initially led to the cancellation of planned activities and, consequently, to a reduction in the number of participants in person at the activities, as reflected in the documentation, is being used to adapt post-COVID activities to the very specific circumstances in a consensual manner. This is reflected in the agreements reached at the Virtual Meetings of those months.

As some examples, we could mention the celebration of the 4th ERHG Forum which was delayed because of the pandemic, or the survey sent to the managers of European historic gardens raising urgent questions of the moment centred on four major themes shared by all; the situation of the Gardens and actions to be taken to maintain them, the transition to virtual activity, and communication and financial issues.

3.2.1 Co-operation in research and development

The Network's activities are based on the academic foundation on which the Route has been built since its beginning. It continues through the direct participation of members of the Scientific Committee in advising and coordinating scientific congresses, meetings, and conferences. The Scientific Committee is composed of members from Spain, Italy, Poland, and Portugal.

Over these four years, a close link has been established between the theoretical foundations laid down and their practical application in all the activities carried out. This interrelationship has been supported by strong internal cooperation, which has enabled us to achieve a decision-making system based on consensus and agreement between the participants.

Since the beginning of this phase, we have encouraged the active participation of all members, who have contributed proposals and opinions at the various Meetings that have been held. These initial agreements served as a starting point for the subsequent planning of scientific meetings, carefully designed and supported by technicians and external experts in the various thematic areas proposed.

It is important to underline that the scientific basis was a fundamental pillar in the whole planning process. Each activity has been designed and developed based on solid scientific evidence, with the aim of guaranteeing quality and rigour in each of the actions undertaken. This scientific foundation has provided effective support for the decisions taken, giving confidence and credibility to all those involved.

Throughout these four years, good internal cooperation has been established, based on a system of democratic decision-making, with debates even with opposing points of view, because it could not be otherwise, where each member has had the opportunity to express his or her ideas and contribute to the development of activities. In addition, the planning of the scientific meetings was supported by a solid scientific base, guaranteeing the quality and specialist approach of each of the proposals presented.

As we have already mentioned, this cooperation in research is also reflected in the thematic cross-disciplinary nature of the ERHG's Annual Forums, and the dissemination of information about these events through the editing and publication of "The Green Herald", which is highly appropriate for this type of direct-publication network. It is accessible to members and the general public via the website.

As for the indirect publications that they give us as part of the documentation, these include mainly references to publications edited by the partners themselves and to publications from scientific meetings, the theme of which is closely linked to that of the Network and complements the general culture of all the partners.

3.2.2 Enhancement of the memory, history and European heritage

The cooperation between the members of the European Route of Historic Gardens Network (ERHG) leads not only to the generation of research and results, but also to the acquisition of valuable historical knowledge about the places and gardens linked to the network's heritage. This historical knowledge becomes a powerful tool for planning specific actions to enhance and preserve this heritage, as well as safeguarding the memory of it.

In this sense, it is important to emphasise that the values and objectives of the European Route of Historic Gardens are significantly in line with the guidelines and recommendations established by the leading international organisations, of course the Council of Europe, Icomos and UNESCO.

Some of the partners of the European Route of Historic Gardens already benefit from the prestigious recognition of UNESCO as a World Heritage Site, which demonstrates the importance and universal value of these sites.

As part of the activities organised by the European Route of Historic Gardens, two initiatives stand out that reinforce the promotion of European heritage and memory. Firstly, the European Historic Gardens Day, which is celebrated every year and aims to raise awareness of the importance of these gardens and to promote visits to and knowledge of them. Secondly, the series of videos entitled "Gardens that vertebrate Europe", which use the power of images and stories to highlight the cultural, historical and landscape values of these gardens and their contribution to Europe's collective memory.

These activities not only serve to disseminate and promote the values and importance of Europe's historic gardens, but also help to strengthen Europe's identity and memory, by highlighting the fact that these places have been witnesses to and protagonists of important moments in the continent's history.

3.2.3 Cultural and educational exchanges for young Europeans

The frequent activities of the ERHG are aimed at different audiences through educational and/or teaching programmes offered by the Network's partners, as we can see from the attached documentation.

Winter and summer activities are particularly popular, with guided tours of the historic gardens explaining their history, architectural features, and remarkable elements. There are also recreational activities, such as search games and craft workshops inspired by the gardens.

Regarding the dissemination and its impact on these cultural and educational exchanges, some partners have developed educational materials and teaching resources, such as visitor guides, brochures, etc., available in print and online.

The use of social networks and the Network's website as tools for sharing information and news about activities and historic gardens is encouraged and promoted, with the aim of broadening the type of visitor.

Following the field visit and the verification of the basis for interpretive and didactic activities, the management and executive secretary informed us that the members are working together to launch a project/programme for young people, where specialist training is combined with practical experience in the field. In addition, the involvement of young people in conservation and restoration projects in historic gardens will be encouraged, offering the opportunity to learn more about garden design, plant management and restoration techniques.

Another notable aspect they wish to promote will be the organisation of workshops and conferences on historic gardening and landscaping, led by experts in the field. These events will take place both in the gardens themselves and in educational establishments, with the aim of promoting interest in and knowledge of green heritage among young people.

Likewise, environmental awareness activities will be carried out, such as thematic routes through the historic gardens, highlighting aspects of biodiversity, the conservation of native species and the sustainable management of natural resources.

Finally, there will be volunteer programmes for young people, who will be able to take part in the upkeep of the historic gardens, such as pruning trees, planting plants and cleaning up green areas.

The way in which they would like to develop this programme is through the presentation of a European project (Erasmus+, Creative Europe...), as they strengthen the opportunities for mobility and exchange. We know from the documentation presented and from the site visit that they have already had a first experience in 2022 with the presentation of this type of project, without having been selected.

3.2.4 Contemporary cultural and artistic practice

The video series "Gardens that vertebrate Europe" is a valuable example of how contemporary cultural and artistic practices are developing within the ERHG. Through an audiovisual montage, these videos show us the different initiatives undertaken in the cultural interpretation of Europe's historic gardens.

One of the key tools used to disseminate these videos, and therefore bring them closer to young people, is the use of social media. Social media gives this content greater visibility and a broader reach, enabling it to reach a wider and more diverse audience. Broadcasting via these platforms allows the ERHG to interact and receive comments and opinions from viewers, generating greater participation and feedback.

But the importance of this series of videos, from our point of view, goes beyond its use of social networks. What sets it apart is the expression of the thematic transversality proposed by the Network, particularly in the Annual Forums, which are meeting places where experts from different artistic disciplines come together to discuss and reflect on the links between historic gardens and other artistic or cultural events.

One of the most significant examples of this encounter between historic gardens and artistic events was the Forum organised in Budapest in September 2022. At this event, specialists from different artistic fields took part and shared their knowledge and experience of how literature has influenced and been influenced by historic gardens.

This multi-disciplinary approach to historical gardens and contemporary cultural and artistic practices shows us the importance of gardens in the cultural development of Europe. These spaces, far from being merely decorative or historical, are veritable generators and catalysts of artistic and cultural expression.

They also have enormous potential for reaching out to new generations and awakening their interest and participation in the ERHG. It is important to recommend widely to the Network the continuation and promotion of these approaches in the new evaluation cycle. This will ensure that contemporary cultural and artistic practices remain an integral and relevant part of the ERHG, and that its continuity and constant updating are guaranteed.

3.2.5 Cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development

According to the information provided in the documentation and the field visit carried out, it is clear that the partners representing the sites and gardens that are part of the Network have a considerable number of people directly involved in their management, planning and maintenance. These people play an essential role in ensuring that the historic gardens are well maintained and accessible to the public.

The growth in cultural tourism is noticeable through the activities organised by the Network. Due to the conditions imposed by the pandemic, tourism activities have focused mainly on the local public or those in the vicinity of the places to be visited, as we have seen both in the activities proposed in the months following the pandemic and in the influx itself. It should be noted, however, that almost 11,000 cultural events/activities are mentioned in the documentation sent out by the ERHG during this period, which testifies to an important level of interest and participation in the cultural offer of the gardens.

Currently, work is underway on the creation of specific tourist packages that will offer a more complete experience that will include linking the historic gardens with historical figures or unique buildings. These packages will complement the existing ERHG offer and the connection between the gardens, meanwhile their historic surroundings will provide visitors with an enriching and unique experience.

In addition, the Network promotes the connection between the most representative historic gardens and smaller or lesser-known ones, such as the specific case of the Xunta de Galicia and the relationship between the different gardens located in this Autonomous Community. This strategy has been used as a way of unifying and structuring the territory, making the gardens important points of reference. This experience is considered to be a model for tourism development, as it not only encourages the conservation and promotion of historic gardens, but also contributes to the sustainable growth of tourism in general.

3.3 Cultural Route Network

3.3.1 Overview of institutional /legal structure of the network

Overall figures:

Countries - 10

Partners - 31

Related sites - 47

Historic Gardens -UNESCO - 9

The network currently includes 31 partners, who manage 47 cultural sites directly linked to the theme of the Route.

The ERHG is represented in a total of 10 countries: Belgium, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Spain, and Ukraine.

A special mention should be made for the incorporation into this evaluation cycle of the partner Sofiyivka National Dendrological Park in Ukraine, due to the very particular situation of the current state of war and the impossibility of carrying out its activities normally. This has generated a movement of internal solidarity, visible in the decisions taken at the Assembly exempting the payment of dues due to this extraordinary situation, maintaining the right to membership.

ERHG is a non-profit association legally registered in the National Register of Associations of the Ministry of the Interior of the Spanish Government. Date of registration and entry on 9 July 2017. It has not been modified.

The Articles of Association describe the nature, objectives and all legal aspects, governance, type of partners..., as well as everything related to the operation of the Network.

At the first meeting prior to certification by the Council of Europe, we observed, through the documentation provided by the ERHG, a clear approach both to the organisation of the governing bodies and to the choice of activities to be carried out jointly. It is important to emphasise that a Governing Board has been set up, responsible for taking decisions and managing the association, and a Scientific Committee, responsible for contributing knowledge and guiding the ERHG's actions on a scientific basis.

With this purpose, a calendar was drawn up for the year, setting out the various meetings to be held and their respective content. This calendar allows us to have a clear vision of the actions that need to be carried out at any given time, and ensures that the Assembly, the Forum, and the meeting of the Scientific Committee coincide in their dates and complement each other.

This distribution, established at the first meeting, has been maintained over the years, demonstrating its effectiveness and the importance of having a plan and a structured organisation. The coincidence of these three key events on the same date maximised the use

of resources and participants' time, avoiding dispersion and ensuring the effectiveness of the results achieved.

The clear organisation of the governing bodies and the detailed planning of activities demonstrate the commitment and focus in which the ERHG works. In addition, the establishment of a common timetable has facilitated communication and synergy between the various players involved, enabling better coordination and a joint approach to achieving the stated objectives.

3.3.2 Overview of the financial situation of the network

By looking at the financial documentation, we can see that the Network's funding has been consolidated through the contribution of the members' own subscriptions to meet the fixed annual expenses: the technical direction and execution of the ERHG's joint activities.

The balance of income and expenses is also well planned and aligned with the ERHG's growth and development strategy, and annual membership fees are within the ranges shared with other Cultural Routes and are in line with what was decided at the General Meeting.

According to the minutes of the meeting held in Budapest in 2022, there was a consensus decision to extend the dues, which had been adjusted downwards due to the very special situation in 2020 and 2021 because of COVID-19. It was decided by consensus to introduce a return to normal, by reviewing the amounts, from 2023.

In addition, external funding was being sought for the development of common strategies with the participation and presentation of European projects such as DRONE4HER, "Drones for historical heritage", the duration of which coincides with the evaluation period.

A situation shared by many cultural routes, which we have verified through the attached documentation concerning the meetings, is the collection of certain dues of subscriptions, some of them openly proposing the loss of membership in the event of payment. In this respect, it must be said that we take responsibility for the difficulties experienced in the years following the pandemic, when the ERHG was born, with regard to possible difficulties in collecting subscriptions, which is why we encourage the Network to continue with the decisions taken at the meetings to make members understand the importance of keeping up to date with the commitments made. In this sense, the specific situations of each member are well presented, and the consensual solutions that are proposed between the participants, to resolve these imbalances from the very first minutes of the Network, maintaining the number of members without any decrease.

Throughout this evaluation process, nothing negative was observed in terms of communication between the partners, who were all involved in the decisions and agreements adopted at the General Meetings, as well as in all the information shared with them through the various means proposed for this purpose.

For the coming years, according to the forecasts and what they told us during the field visit, an increase in income is expected thanks to the incorporation of new members, as well as through the presentation of and participation in specific projects (EU projects), which will contribute to the growth of the Network's human resources sector.

3.3.3 Current composition of the network by country and type of member

Currently, the ERHG is made up of 31 members (mainly public bodies) who manage 47 historic sites (including Historic Gardens, Botanical Gardens, Gardens associated with Palaces from different historical periods, etc.).

The countries in which ERHG is represented are: Belgium, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Spain and Ukraine.

The character of the members of the Network, practically in their totality and being entities of public management at different territorial scales, is public and the Gardens are managed through activities aligned with the approach, knowledge, and identification of this unique heritage for the enjoyment of the citizens.

It highlights the current protocol accepted by all the partners through its presentation to the General Meeting for the incorporation of new partners wishing to join the Network, under the supervision of the Scientific Committee for approval.

The composition of the Network over these seven years has been increased on the one hand by the interest of certain Gardens which have become aware of the initiative thanks to close contacts with other partners, and on the other hand, by invitations and meetings with entities whose main management object is the Gardens or sites linked to them. Evidence of this can be found in the documentation relating to the certification of new partners.

The incorporation of the French and/or English partners that were on the agenda for this period was not carried out during this period. We note that it is the Network itself which lists them in the attached documentation as potential future members of the ERHG.

There are no members from the Russian Federation.

3.3.4 Network extension since last evaluation

During this period, which we evaluated, we were able to demonstrate the good results obtained in the search for partners for the Network. A total of 16 new members were incorporated, enabling us to balance and complete the development of the Network. However, it is important to emphasise that it is not just a question of an increase in numbers, but that it has also been possible to add partners who bring fundamental qualitative value to the consolidation of the Network.

The inclusion of Greece and Hungary as new members of the EPA is remarkable, as they strengthen the network by contributing and bringing new visions. In addition, it is important to mention that we have increased our presence in Hungary, Spain, Romania and/or Italy through the incorporation of institutions that manage various gardens. These accessions have helped compensate to some extent for the slight imbalance in the geographical distribution of partners across Europe. Before this evaluation, most of the partners were concentrated in Spain and Italy, but thanks to the accession of new members, they are on the way to establishing a more representative and diversified balance.

In contrast, it is worth highlighting the qualitative contribution made by certain partners in particular. One notable example is the region of Galicia, which, as well as promoting and collaborating on several cultural routes, has made it possible for other, smaller gardens to be incorporated indirectly. Thanks to regional collaboration, gardens that on their own would not have been able to join the ERHG due to limited resources can now join the Network and benefit from shared activities and resources.

3.3.5 Strategy for the network extension in the three years to come

During the period 2020-2023, a planning process was carried out to extend the network to other territories and countries. This strategy has proved successful and, thanks to the positive results achieved, it is expected that the Network will continue to grow gradually over the coming years.

Among the main short-term objectives is the incorporation of French and English partners. We are aware from the field visit that work has been carried out directly on this collaboration for some time, indicating a commitment and willingness to achieve this objective.

This strategic approach to international extension is not only set to remain in place but should continue to be beneficial to the Network. The inclusion of French and English partners has the potential to further strengthen the presence and impact of the Network in these countries, as in the case of the French country, the ERHG is present.

We are also informed that the Management Board will continue to contact, inform, and involve the managing bodies of UNESCO-certified Historic Sites and Gardens, with a view to their joining the Network.

It should be noted that this was a suggestion made during the first evaluation.

3.4 Communication tools

3.4.1 Current state of communication tools developed by the network (graphic charter, communication materials, logo, communication channels, signposting, maps, etc.)

Over the last three years, the ERHG has carried out a process of developing and differentiating the Network's image, creating a recognisable graphic identity and applying this aesthetic to all

the means of communication and dissemination used. All the information media follow a consistent design line with its own logo and that of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe Programme.

One of the most important channels for communicating with partners is the launch of "The Green Herald", a newsletter that we mentioned earlier. In addition, the Network has various means of communication, such as a comprehensive website offering detailed information on the Route, links to partners and the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe Programme, as well as brochures and specific merchandising items such as fabric bags and notebooks.

All this information is available in English, French and Spanish.

The ERHG also uses various social media platforms, including Facebook, X, the YouTube channel, Instagram, and LinkedIn, to ensure that information and activities are widely disseminated and to carry out its own management tasks. All these platforms are constantly and actively used by the Network.

Regarding the signposting, during the site visit to Lloret de Mar, we noticed the implementation of the company's image, not only through the placement of the identification plaque for members, but also in the information panels that are placed along the route of the Santa Clotilde Garden (a model for other partners).

We know that all members have their membership plaque and corresponding membership certificate, even though we lack more visual implementation of the ERHG logo on route information panels or on media that offer visibility to the general public as a member of the Network.

Taking for example, the Alhambra Gardens in Granada, Spain, or the Royal Castle in Warsaw, Poland where there are information panels referring to the gardens without the Network logo and where we will have to work with the partners in a particular way to achieve this common visibility, if not in all the media, then in some with more visibility.

3.4.2 Compliance with the Guidelines for the Use of the Logo "Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe"

The design line implemented on the Network is characterised by the inclusion of the logo unified with that of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe Programme. This choice not only meets established usage requirements, but also guarantees a striking visual presence in all the information media used by the Network. Whether in the signposting that adorns public spaces, in the labelling that identifies emblematic places, in the files and documentation that support the activities, or in any other means of dissemination authorised for this purpose (from the web to social media, including merchandising).

The unified presence of the logo on all these media strengthens the Network's visual identity, ensuring that its message and purpose are immediately and effectively recognised by all. In

addition, this visual uniformity reinforces the Network's commitment to the values and objectives of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe Programme.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

A compilation is made of all the documentation generated and presented in this evaluation process for the preparation of these conclusions:

I. List of eligibility criteria for themes

The Cultural Route of the Council of Europe of Historic Gardens (ERHG) pursues the main and initial objective since its constitution, which is none other than to promote recognition of the historical, artistic, and social value of historic gardens and their belonging to a common European cultural heritage.

According to what has been verified after the fieldwork and the study of the documentation, the activities themselves have a clear objective since they are entities for the management, research or dissemination of the historic sites and gardens that make up the Network.

II. List of priority fields of action

- Cooperation in research and development : The Scientific Committee is made up of members, experts and specialists from the Network, who correctly and constantly carry out the work of support and thematic justification. The actions convey the strength of the research and cooperation work of the development axes implemented within the ERHG.

- Enhancement of the memory, history, and European heritage: The theme of historic gardens continues to be representative of a shared European memory, history, and heritage, as they are inseparable from the palaces, castles, monasteries, abbeys, town houses and cities to which they are attached. They have been places for the transmission of knowledge from different fields (architecture, botany, art...) and have brought territories closer together through their events. In this sense, the ERHG clearly considers them to be a fundamental pillar in the development of the Network, and they convey this through their activities.

- Cultural and educational exchanges for young Europeans: The Network offers a large number of activities for young people, also designed for different levels of education, as we have examined in the documentation and on the partners' pages. We need to continue along these lines, planning the specific activities for schoolchildren that have been carried out so far.

To encourage further exploration of the possibilities offered by the presentation of specific cooperation projects or European projects to strengthen the lines of training, interpretation and research, and exchange between young people..., in line with what will continue to be developed with the partners in this cycle. We will celebrate the eligibility of the project if it is finally accepted for your grant.

- Contemporary cultural and artistic practice: In addition to the actions linked to artistic performances or festivals (theatre, concerts, activities for schoolchildren, etc.) and other

actions linked to contemporary cultural issues, I was impressed by the transversality of the themes proposed in important activities for the ERHG, such as the specific case of the Annual Forums. We encourage members to continue proposing this type of action involving contemporary artistic practices, because of the singularity of the pairing it provokes, and because of the creative possibilities with the Historic Gardens as a central axis.

- Cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development: The whole group of partners works within their respective administrations with guidelines that contribute to achieving a more sustainable development of the area through responsible cultural tourism. It is relatively simple for the ERHG to implement actions, jointly or individually with each of them, which respond to this priority. Some initiatives have already been launched along these lines, and will need to be continued in the coming years, as in the case of the themed tourist packages and activities for schoolchildren developed in the Gardens...

III. List of criteria for networks

The Network currently includes 47 historic gardens as elements to be visited. Each of them has its own dynamics and functioning, which does not exclude collaborative work within the Network through the joint celebration of activities promoted by the ERHG as indicated.

Both the number of participants and the number of activities carried out are considerable, which says a lot about the internal governance to make the theme of the Network attractive.

We recall the potential of historic gardens, already reflected in UNECO's recognition of this very special cultural heritage through the Declarations: 35 sites in 13 European countries on its World Heritage List are historic gardens or monuments housing historic gardens, and possible candidates for membership of the Network.

Communication tools

The network offers a wide range of communication tools. It highlights the website with a wealth of content and links, in three languages: Spanish, French and English.

The network is active on Facebook, X, LinkedIn and Instagram and has its own YouTube channel.

Specific ERHG signposting is located at the entrance to the Gardens and at the Partners' headquarters, to identify membership of the Network, also in several languages.

Recommendations:

During the evaluation of the ERHG 2020 certification, it was specified that there were no recommendations to be made since the Form submitted met all the criteria and requirements of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe Programme, apart from the positive evaluation itself which they had submitted as the subject for certification.

It was also suggested that greater use be made of existing national networks to reach applicants more directly to become partners in this evaluation cycle.

In this evaluation, we will list a series of recommendations, which we have highlighted in completing the section for the body of the evaluation, and which we believe will benefit the Network in the next cycle:

- Involve and convey to ERHG members the importance of joining the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe Programme, its commitments, and benefits. This would mean greater identification and belonging. This must directly involve the presence of more diverse nationalities in the governing bodies.

In this sense, we must also work towards greater visibility of the ERHG and Council of Europe logo in all the sites and Gardens that are members of the Network.

- Continue the process of selecting future partners, particularly those already outlined and indicated above; on the one hand, the historic gardens designated as World Heritage Sites, with which synergies could be generated for future joint projects; and on the other hand, the incorporation of French and English institutions as partners.

Once again, we recommend that you use the national networks for more direct contact and access to future partners with more institutional support.

- We know that this is a line of action, but for this Cycle we are insisting on participation in calls for European and cooperation projects, encouraging collaboration between partners and the search for external funding to consolidate joint programmes. Over the next few years, we will be paying close attention to the proposals that have already been put forward.

- Take advantage of the potential of the Historical Garden/Contemporary Practices partnership to consolidate the activities initiated in this direction, and explore new joint initiatives, with the implicit aim of diversifying the cultural offer for all audiences by using the media available itself.

- Pursue the line of communication, both internal and external, using all the means at the ERHG's disposal. During this cycle, we will be looking forward to the first of the remaining 3 chapters in the series "Gardens that vertebrate Europe", as an important activity to be carried out over the next few years.

- We will have to pay attention in the coming years to the challenge of adapting the income/expenses with the management/activities and with the partners/objectives of the ERHG, because of the great potential that the Network continues to have to develop during this Cycle. We wish you all the best, and the experience we have gained since its creation will ensure that it remains so.

For my part, I can only inform you that the ERHG meets all the criteria and requirements after the first evaluation cycle to continue to be part of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe Programme, for all of the above.

Even more so when we see that, thanks to the decisions taken by the Network, democratically and aligned in the same direction, it consolidates the work of the people in charge of coordination, from the Scientific Committee, the Chair, the Executive Secretary and Management, and its activities go beyond the theoretical to be disseminated in a practical way.

I can only conclude by congratulating the ERHG on the work it has done and encouraging it to continue in the same direction, taking into account the considerations that have been made, consolidating the work that has been started and continuing decisively to plan joint activities.

CRITERIA		Recommendations Previous Evaluation 2019-2020	Has the route addressed the recommendation since the last evaluation?		Recommendations current evaluation 2023-2024
			YES	NO	
I. Cultural route theme			☐	☐	
II. Priority fields of action	Cooperation in research and development		X	☐	To involve and convey to members the importance of the membership. More diversity of nationalities in the management bodies during this Cycle
	Enhancement of memory, history, and European heritage		X	☐	
	Cultural and educational exchanges for young Europeans		X	☐	Present projects with partners for external financing in order to develop priority fields of action.
	Contemporary cultural and artistic practice		X	☐	Consolidate and enhance the Historic Gardens/Contemporary Practices combination
	Cultural Tourism and Sustainable Cultural development	It was suggested that greater use be made of national networks to gain more direct access to potential future partners.	X	☐	Encourage and promote cooperative work between partners through the planning of joint actions. A line already started by the ERHG.

III. Cultural Route Network		X	☐	- Continue the protocol initiated for the accession of new members - Adapt to the growth challenges of the ERHG, given the growth potential of these years
Communication tools		X	☐	Use all the communication resources of the ERHG to reach as wide an audience as possible

5. List of references

- Application Form - Cycle 2023-2024
- Bylaws
- Members
- Financial information
- General Assemblies
 - 3-12-2020 - Ordinary. Granada (Spain)
 - 25-06-2020 - Ordinary. On line
 - 04-29-2021 - Extraordinary. Virtual
 - 29-04-2021 - Ordinary. Virtual
 - 09-04-2021 - Extraordinary. Hannover (Germany)
 - 09-04-2021 - Ordinary. Hannover (Germany)
 - 06-04-2022 - Extraordinary. Lloret de Mar (Spain)
 - 06-04-2022 - Ordinary. Lloret de Mar (Spain)
 - 22-09-2022 - Extraordinary. Budapest (Hungary)
 - 22-09-2022 - Ordinary. Budapest (Hungary)

- Activities
- Additional information

Visibility. Communications equipment
PR (Facebook, X, LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube Channel)

Publications

- Newsletter - *Newsletter*
- Posters
- Brochures and information material obtained during the field visit.
- Web site

The documentation submitted for evaluation has been approved as it complies with the requested criteria and requirements.

6. Annex 1: Expert field visit and interviews with the network management and members

Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe Certification cycle 2023-2024	
<i>Independent expert</i>	MANUEL PEREGRINA PALOMARES
<i>Cultural route under evaluation</i>	EUROPEAN ROUTE OF HISTORIC GARDENS
<i>Countries where the visit on the field will take place</i>	Spain
<i>Cities / sites to visit</i>	VALENCIA / LLORET DE MAR / ARANJUEZ / GRANADA
<i>Date of the field visit</i>	Valencia / Lloret de Mar (Girona) - 10/29-1/11/2023 Granada - 5/12/23
<i>Means of transport used to arrive at destination (plane, train, car, etc.)</i>	Private car Total Km. Visit Granada-Girona : 937,3 x 2 (i/v) - 1.874,6 Km. Visit Alhambra : Hometown
<i>Was the visit organized in coordination with the route management?</i>	Yes, from the first moment, the manager and the director were at my disposal to plan the visit and its program.
<i>Description of activities to be carried out during the trip (interviews, meetings, visits, participation in events, etc.).</i>	Visit Valence/Lloret de Mar : - Day 10/30, Meeting in Valence with Ana Rosa Moreno, technical manager of the European Route of the Historic Gardens. - Day 10/30, Arrival in Lloret, preliminary private visit. - Day 10/31, Meeting with Marina Nicolas Abellán, Heritage Consultant and with Ana Fuentes, Technical director of the Route, of the Town Hall of Lloret de Mar (Visit of the Historical Garden of Sta. Clotilde in Lloret de Mar) - Day 1/11, Return to Grenade Visit the Alhambra : - Day 4/12. Private technical visit – Setting up the itinerary. - meeting with Antonio Peral, responsable curator <i>Patronato Alhambra y Generalife, Granada</i>

7. Annex 2: Expert assessment checklist

LIST OF CONTRACTS FOR EVALUATION AT THE EXPERT'S DESIGNATION					
QUESTIONS			Oui	Non	
3.1 THEME	1	Does the theme of the Route represent a common value (historical, cultural, or heritage) to several European countries?	x		
	2	Does the theme of the Route offer a solid basis for youth cultural and educational exchanges?	x		
	3	Does the theme of the Route offer a solid basis for innovative activities?	x		
	4	Does the theme of the Route offer a solid basis for cultural tourism products development?	x		
	5	Has the theme been researched/developed by academics/experts from different regions of Europe?	x		
3.2 FIELDS OF ACTION	3.2.1 Co-operation in research and development	6	Does the Route offer a platform for co-operation in research and development of European cultural themes/values?	x	
		7	Does the Route play a unifying role around major European themes, enabling dispersed knowledge to be brought together?	x	
		8	Does the Route show how these themes are representative of European values shared by several European countries?	x	
		9	Does the Route illustrate the development of these values and the variety of forms they may take in Europe?	x	
		10	Does the Route have a network of universities and research center working on its theme at the European level?	x	
		11	Does the Route have a multidisciplinary Scientific Committee?	x	
		12	Does the Scientific Committee work on its theme at the European level?	x	
		13	Does the Scientific Committee carry out research and analysis of the issues relevant to its theme and/or activities on the theoretical level?	x	
	14	Does the Scientific Committee carry out research and analysis of the issues relevant to its theme and/or activities on the practical level?	x		
	3.2.2 Enhancement of the memory, history and European heritage	15	Do the Route activities take into account and explain the historical significance of tangible and intangible European heritage?	x	
		16	Do the Route activities promote the values of the Council of Europe?	x	
		17	Do the Route activities promote the brand of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe?	x	
		18	Does the Route work in conformity with international charters and conventions on cultural heritage preservation?	x	
		19	Do the Route activities identify, preserve and develop European heritage sites in rural destinations?	x	

		20	Do the Route activities identify, preserve and develop European heritage sites in industrial areas in the process of economic restructuring?	x	
		21	Do the Route activities valorize the heritage of ethnic or social minorities in Europe?	x	
		22	Do the Route activities contribute to a better understanding of the concept of cultural heritage, the importance of its preservation and sustainable development?	x	
		23	Do the Route activities enhance physical and intangible heritage, explain its historical significance and highlight its similarities in the different regions of Europe?	x	
		24	Do the Route activities take account of and promote the charters, conventions, recommendations and work of the Council of Europe, UNESCO and ICOMOS relating to heritage restoration, protection and enhancement, landscape and spatial planning (European Cultural Convention, Faro convention, European Landscape Convention, World Heritage Convention, ...)?	x	
	3.2.3 Cultural and educational exchanges of young Europeans	25	Are the youth exchanges (cultural and educational) planned to develop a better understanding of the concept of European citizenship?	x	
		26	Are the youth exchanges (cultural and educational) planned to emphasize the value of new personal experience through visiting diverse places?	x	
		27	Are the youth exchanges (cultural and educational) planned to encourage social integration and exchanges of young people from different social backgrounds and regions of Europe?	x	
		28	Are the youth exchanges (cultural and educational) planned to offer collaborative opportunities for educational institutions at various levels?	x	
		29	Are the youth exchanges (cultural and educational) planned to place the emphasis on personal and real experiences through the use of places and contacts?	x	
		30	Are the youth exchanges (cultural and educational) planned to set up pilot schemes with several participating countries?	x	
		31	Are the youth exchanges (cultural and educational) planned to give rise to co-operation activities which involve educational institutions at various levels?	x	
	3.2.4 Contemporary cultural and artistic practices	32	Do the Route's cultural activities promote intercultural dialogue and multidisciplinary exchange between various artistic expressions in European countries?	x	
		33	Do the Route's cultural activities encourage artistic projects that establish links between cultural heritage and contemporary culture?	x	
		34	Do the Route's cultural activities encourage innovative cultural and contemporary art practices* connecting them with the history of skills development?	x	

3.3 NETWORK		35	Do the Route's cultural activities encourage collaboration between culture amateurs and professionals via relevant activities and networks creation?**	x	
		36	Do the Route's cultural activities encourage debate and exchange - in a multidisciplinary and intercultural perspective - between various cultural and artistic expressions in different countries of Europe?	x	
		37	Do the Route's cultural activities encourage activities and artistic projects which explore the links between heritage and contemporary culture?	x	
		38	Do the Route's cultural activities highlight the most innovative and creative practices?	x	
		39	Do the Route's cultural activities link these innovative and creative practices with the history of skills development?***	x	
	3.2.5 Cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development	40	Do the Route's activities (relevant to sustainable cultural tourism development) assist in local, regional, national and/ or European identity formation?	x	
		41	Do the Route's activities (relevant to sustainable cultural tourism development) actively involve 3 major means to raise awareness of their cultural projects: print, broadcast and social media?	x	
		42	Do the Route's activities promote dialogue between urban and rural communities and cultures?	x	
		43	Do the Route's activities promote dialogue between developed and disadvantaged regions?	x	
		44	Do the Route's activities promote dialogue between different regions (south, north, east, west) of Europe?	x	
		45	Do the Route's activities promote dialogue between majority and minority (or native and immigrant) cultures?	x	
		46	Do the Route's activities open possibilities for co-operation between Europe and other continents?	x	
		47	Do the Route's activities draw decision makers' attention to the necessity of protecting heritage as part of the sustainable development of the territory?	x	
		48	Do the Route's activities aim to diversify cultural product, service and activities offers?	x	
		49	Do the Route's activities develop and offer quality cultural tourism products, services or activities transnationally?	x	
		50	Do the Route's activities develop partnerships with public and private organisations active in the field of tourism?	x	
		51	Did the network prepare and use tools along the Route to raise the number of visitors and the economic impacts of the Route on the territories crossed?	x	
		52	Does the Route represent a network involving at least three Council of Europe's member states?	x	
		53	Was the theme of the Route chosen and accepted by the network members?	x	

	54	Was the conceptual framework of the Route founded on a scientific basis?	x		
	55	Does the network involve several Council of Europe member states in all or part of its projects?	x		
	56	Is the network financially sustainable?	x		
	57	Does the network have a legal status (association, federation of associations, EEIG,...)?	x		
	58	Does the network operate democratically?	x		
	59	Does the network specify its objectives and working methods?	x		
	60	Does the network specify the regions concerned by the project?	x		
	61	Does the network specify its partners and participating countries?	x		
	62	Does the network specify the fields of action involved?	x		
	63	Does the network specify its overall strategy in the short and long term?	x		
	64	Does the network identify potential participants and partners in Council of Europe member states and/or other world countries?	x		
	65	Does the network provide details of its financing (financial reports and/or activity budgets)?	x		
	66	Does the network provide details of its operational plan?	x		
	67	Does the network append the basic text(s) confirming its legal status?	x		
3.4 COMMUNICATION TOOLS		68	Does the Route have its own logo?	x	
		69	Do all partners of the network use the logo on their communication tools?	x	
		70	Does the Route have its own dedicated website?	x	
		71	Is the website available in English and French?	x	
		72	Is it the website available in other languages?	x	
		73	Does the network use effectively social networks and web 2.0?	x	
		74	Does the network publish brochures on the Route?	x	
		75	If yes, are the brochures available in English?	x	
		76	If yes, are the brochures available in French?	x	
	For cultural itineraries certified by the Council of Europe	77	Is the title of “Cultural Route of the Council of Europe” present on all communication materials (including press releases, webpages, publications, etc.)?	x	
		78	Is the certification logo present on all communication materials?	x	
		79	Is the certification logo used in accordance to the guidelines for its use (size and position,...)?	x	
80		Are the logos (Cultural Route + certification logo) provided to all the members of the Route?	x		
81		Does the Council of Europe certification logo appear on road signs/ boards indicating the cultural route?	x		
SCORE			81	0	